

Materialism in the millennial generation: impact on the fashion industry



Abstract

This study is to investigate the interrelation between the obsession with materialism in the millennial society and why owning luxury item gives them the satisfaction of possession in their daily life. The study focuses on the highly influential streetwear brand Supreme and history of streetwear culture and how it evolves from the perspective of art and what influenced the changes in the movement. The study aims to provide an understanding of how the materialism grows in a youth and why they are putting off on buying homes and not investing in relationship or experience as well. The study highlights how the materialism behaviour of the youth are going to change the images of streetwear and the creative process in the fashion industry. Lastly, the study is to convey a message to the society about the effect of materialism on the youth and how it is going to shape the future of fashion culture.

Introduction

Streetwear fashion is a street movement born in the late 1970s in Los Angeles, California by the surf culture. It is defined as casual and comfortable clothing. By today's definition, Streetwear is a fashion style inspired by what is happening or current ongoing scene on the streets. It is getting more diverse as sportswear brands also play the role in the streetwear scene. Sportswear brands sneakers have made sportswear have set the brand a footwear benchmark in the streetwear style. It is heavily influenced by the music and skateboarding style, which is the main interest of the youth in this generation. In this era, streetwear fashion is no longer a stranger in the fashion industry.

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Streetwear brands got influenced by certain aesthetic such as skateboarding, hip-hop music and lifestyle. Streetwear apparels graphics are usually referring to the pop culture of the following generation. Youth sort of find them nostalgic and this makes them appreciate it not on the fact that it has good graphics but it is because it creates a nostalgic moment that the youth are able to relate to. Design in streetwear staples such as photography, photo collage, illustration, and typography. It has the concept as fast fashion brands but streetwear brands have an iconic identity in the fashion scene. Modern streetwear culture is not just on the clothing line. Streetwear brands start creating more diverse products from electric guitar to ashtray instead of just clothing to delve into the lifestyle of the youth.

There's no doubt that streetwear brands have a great impact on the streetwear culture and fashion realm. Mass media plays the role in making streetwear brand popular through entertainment. The youth have the easy access to the advertising and commercial with the social media nowadays. With the appearance in popular movies and music, youth are exposed to the streetwear brands easily too. It has become the uniform of the famous artists in the media. Celebrities also start wearing certain streetwear brand instead of luxury brands. Living in the era where the youth is driven by possession of goods, the inflated demand of streetwear has become higher than ever since due to the limited quantity of clothing released to the public. Few streetwear brands start to issue raffle tickets at the entrance of their stores in order to be fair to the consumers. The outcome of this is the huge increase in the streetwear brands value in the marketplace. This led to the birth of reselling in the streetwear fashion culture. People start queuing up outside the store

a day or two before the release date of certain collection in order to purchase an item and resell it with a hefty amount of profit to the one who wants it. Police are on the scene to prevent riots from happening. The reselling culture encourages youth to spend tons of money on streetwear brands to look cool in the scene. This spreads out to the whole world and soon after that streetwear becomes a huge image in the fashion scene. Youth starts paying attention to the fashion industry. With the huge crowds of millennials in the modern streetwear scene, luxury brands are collaborating with streetwear brand in order to reach out to the millennials. This transforms the streetwear culture from classic streetwear to luxury streetwear. From the youth point of view, it is easier to own luxury designer brands too. From this, it also feeds the materialism more into the youth. Thus the materialism starts to grow inside the youth circle and soon the culture grows wider.

The materialism of the youth has been seeded since the young age. Children are expecting an expensive birthday gift and Christmas present. Exposed to the modern TV commercials, the youth have been taught that money is the power and without money, there will be no happiness. This encourages youth to steal and commit violence.

Possessing valuable items has been perceived as being more famous and reputable. That's how most of the youth nowadays make friends. They often think that making friends with the wealthy ones alleviates their reputation and fame in their social circle. This led to youth starting to categorize their friend and putting people in the box in their social circle. By this, the demand for luxury and valuable items increased rapidly. This initiates the youth to use violence in their desire of owning luxury items. Those violence includes <https://assignbuster.com/materialism-in-the-millennial-generation-impact-on-the-fashion-industry/>

robbing, stealing, and even killing. Due to the obsession towards luxury items, teenagers are often being killed over a pair of sneakers and sometimes got seriously injured.

The rise of materialism in the youth has a serious impact on the society. The market in the streetwear fashion industry are increasing exponentially and has become wider than ever. Several job opportunities have been provided to the industry. However, the tradeoffs of this are people are becoming obsessed with an item and start to neglect the appreciation of people around them. Everyone is investing in greater happiness by spending money on objects that make them feel better emotionally. The future of materialistic youth is beyond the imagination right now as it keeps evolving from generation to generation.

Chapter 1 The Streetwear Fashion

Like the culture itself, the definition of streetwear has been circulating and changing forever in the streetwear culture. Aaron Levant, the founder of the streetwear show called Agenda, said that you know a streetwear when you see it by yourself. Streetwear is all about the free spirits and their aspiration in the street culture. The design aesthetics are a mixture of New York skate culture, fashion, music and art. To put it in a simple word, streetwear is a reflection of what is the identity of the youth of today. In today's streetwear, there's no longer a specific look for streetwear fashion. The separation of streetwear style ranges from urban goths to the skate and surfer initiates the marketer to expand their brand to further subcultures. One of the most well-known is hip-hop. The aesthetics of streetwear are always present in the hip-hop culture and entertainment and portrayed massively through mass media. <https://assignbuster.com/materialism-in-the-millennial-generation-impact-on-the-fashion-industry/>

The influence of streetwear starts to blend into the designer brand. Virgil Abloh starts to showcase his streetwear influenced collection in his own brand, Off-White to reach out the teenager market. Streetwear has grown into a really massive culture and is no stranger to most of the teenagers these days. There are thousands of streetwear brands saturating in the current market to prevent the culture from diminishing. Among the brands that are really appealing to the teenagers and young consumers on the social media are highly reputable streetwear labels such as Supreme and Stussy. The success of the brand is credited to their own independently running store and the capabilities in marketing their products through e-commerce. Arguably, Supreme is most likely to be the one brand that is able to cover the whole facts of streetwear fashion due to their rich history, controversial design and huge impact in the streetwear culture.

Chapter 1. 1 Supreme, the Cult Brand

Often being labelled as a cult brand in the streetwear fashion, Supreme doesn't need an introduction when it comes to the streetwear culture. Originated from New York, Supreme is a well-known streetwear brand and a staple in the streetwear fashion culture. Supreme started out as a small skateboard shop in 1994 and has rapidly grown into a legendary streetwear cult status. Supreme was founded by the James Jebbia who served as the store manager at both Union and Stussy in New York back in 1994. Due to Stussy was becoming a bigger and more available brand, James Jebbia decided to leave the company and opened a store dedicated to skating, which he first had the idea when he was so really into the skateboarding culture, the designs and the philosophy of skateboarding. Realizing that

there was not a demanding skateboard market in downtown New York, he was driven to open the first good skate shop to fill the gap. The public relation of James Jebbia is one of the keys to why he is able to create a successful brand too. Having friends in the skateboarding scene since the early, James Jebbia knew the way on how skateboard market was operated, this was another factor that motivated him to open a skate store. By doing this, James Jebbia fulfilled the needs of the youth in the streetwear culture at the time where youth are deeply rooted in the arts and anarchistic behaviour. Supreme has allocated itself in the streetwear market for its timeless style and authenticity value in the streetwear culture. The store has become the holy grail of the youth streetwear culture.

Chapter 1. 2 Design Elements of Supreme

The success of the brand is highly by interpreting a mix of the city's symbolic icon covering fashion music, celebrity and politics in their design for their clothing, shoes and skateboards. The design element is what they transpire and reflect on daily fashion style for young teenagers. Products including jackets, shoes, shirt, skateboard and accessories are designed to appeal the youth generation especially the one who are into the hip-hop and skateboarding culture. To give an example, the status symbol of Supreme is so impactful that even the 'box logo tee' which is a simple white tee with the Supreme logo on it are extremely valuable and usually sold out instantly when they are released. The collection offered by Supreme has a wide variety of selection. By doing this, Supreme is able to ensure everyone can find an item they want. Alternatively, this strategy of creating varieties of products also maintain the identity of Supreme and to ensure brand logo are

able to be seen everywhere so it helps to build the brand reputation without spending a dime on an advertising campaign.

Chapter 1.3 Promotional Campaign of Supreme

Because of social media, the streetwear culture will never fade away due to most of the consumers are the young teenager who is attracted to the screen. Related to that, the mysterious successful brand Supreme never really rely on the advertisement campaign to become this popular. It always abstained print advertisement and physical advertisement. In this digital age, Supreme utilizes the social media platform to reach out to their consumer instead of using common marketing strategy done by the other fashion brands. Supreme has never made any appearance in the fashion show to reach out their consumer. The controversial brand and their brand logo itself are mostly circulating on social media and the word-of-mouth of teenagers through the street scene. However, one of the most recognizable advertisement every done by them will be the New York poster advertisement campaign. With the poster of their photo tees filled up on the wall of their flagship stores and the landmark around the city, the poster signifies that there's a new collection of the season arriving soon. It may seem like a very cliché advertising campaign, the advertisement stunt is so covetable that people often rip it down from the wall and take it with them. The level of obsession is so high that even the advertisement material of the brand has a value on its own. One good approach done by Supreme is the physical store is not only open for shopping, they're an epicentre of the skate scene in the city. Teenagers come around and hangout at the spot. This brings the community together to push the streetwear culture.

Chapter 1. 4 Celebrities and Supreme

The celebrity culture is also one of the sole reason why Supreme is wildly popular among the youth generation. Celebrities such as musicians started wearing Supreme either they got sponsored or they bought it. This genius idea of promoting the brand through entertainment by Supreme implies that the brand is widely exposed through mass media. Supreme knows how to boost their popularity in this generation where youth mostly spent their time on their electronics. The marketing strategy of Supreme plays the role of growing more materialistic teenager. There's no mass production for every Supreme garment and having only limited quantities of their products, Supreme products are so exclusive and rare. The huge demand for the products makes teenagers start to queue up overnight in front of the store before the release date in order to get some items. Lines snaked around the block around the store by teenagers ready to spend all their savings on the clothing and make profits from it by reselling them to those who didn't get anything from the releases. With teenagers so obsessed with the brand, they are willing to pay the extra amount of money to fulfil their desire. This determines that the flourishing second market of Supreme products also contributes to promoting materialism in the youth generation. Violence and crime occur when some people didn't get anything from the releases, they decided to rob or steal from others. This pushes the company to increase the security at the store and ensure there are no riots happening when the youthful crowd are lining up.

Chapter 1. 5 Supreme Collaboration with Other Brands

Supreme also reaches out several brands to have a collaboration to get exposed more to all age groups. A further instance of this is, the collaboration of Supreme and Louis Vuitton is the most controversial and most prominent collaboration done by Supreme to date. Able to collaborate with the biggest luxury label in the world, Supreme has become well-known among the older generation too. It breaks the barrier between streetwear fashion and high luxury fashion. The collaboration is a great opportunity for Louis Vuitton to get exposed to the streetwear scene and able to up its cool factor among the youth culture. Technically, the blends between streetwear and luxury brands exist in this collaboration, providing teenagers with the satisfaction of owning luxury and cultural element in it. To support this statement, Juliet B. Schor explains that the brand teenagers want aren't just any brands. Instead, they crave luxury brands and high-end items. To point to evidence, parents and buyers reported a change as girls aged six to ten became more label conscious. With the amount of youth surrounding the crowds in the queue on other streetwear stores such as Bape and Palace Skateboards, it can be seen that Juliet B. Schor's statement is true.

In conclusion, streetwear culture has been for ages and it evolves in a unique way. By now when you're reading this, the definition of streetwear today might not be the same one tomorrow. The brand is able to grow exponentially due to the consumption behaviour of the teenagers who are bonded to a specific brand. Knowing this, in order to make more profits from the teenager high consumption behaviour, the brand continues to make products to expand the culture and appeal the teenager to follow the brand.

The portrayal of celebrities in the streetwear brand amplifies the influences of the culture and with this, the underground subcultures are now easily accessible to the public.

Chapter 2 The Teenagers Consuming Behaviour

The modern teenagers are essentially taught to treat money and consumption as the way to live a lavish life. In order to understand how materialism was introduced to a teenager, we need to start by observing the basics of psychology and behaviour of a human behaviour. The patterns in consumer buying behaviour can be identified when we understand the human behaviour. It seems that the patterns are highly influenced by one's motivation. Thus, the marketers take advantages of this factor to and infuse it into their advertising campaign. The marketers know how to motivate and create an urgency to persuade the teenagers. The emotion felt by a teenager when checking out products are the main causes of what they will buy. Teenagers somehow are emotionally attached and obsessed with a product as if all these products have certain personalities that are conveyed through visual and image. The fact that marketers stated that emotions do drive up their sales, the marketers then invest in creative and persuasive advertisement campaign in a way to evoke the emotions of a teenager. To point an evidence, teenagers do have a choice to purchase an identical item that is cheaper and still work the same way. However, they rather choose to purchase the item with a brand that has a personality that 'communicates' to them, relating to their emotion with decision making. Thus, it is never about a good decision when it comes to deciding which item to get, rather, it is about how the teenagers feel about what they see, touch and smell that

decides what they buy. It clearly means that the emotions of teenagers contribute materialism and buying powers into their consumption habit.

Chapter 2.1 The 'Cool' Culture

The pressure of being cool has been around for decades. The definition of cool is always hard to pin down because the today's cool might not be cool tomorrow. The trend of cool is constantly changing from a different aspect. Cool cats and hipsters were the cool categories back in the fifties. In those days, the teen defines cool by many acceptable personal styles. The definition of cool has been fitted into the modern era. Cool is defined as something every product is trying to be and what every teenager needs to have to fit into the streetwear society. The marketing strategy of defining cool as the key to social success has elevated the teenagers' level of materialism. A report has been done by branding expert Martin Lindstrom stating that the attraction of the brands has taken over the functionality of the product of the brand. Teenagers often spend so much more money on purchasing a more luxury brand because owning an expensive item is the theme of cool.

In the book *Born to Buy* by Juliet B. Schor, she stated that the teenager in this generation demands particular brands when they're asked. The brand-conscious behaviour in this generation of teenagers is what encourages materialism to an individual. Teenagers want to be socially accepted in the cool peers to feel superior in popularity and determine who belongs in the cool category. Being so concerned about their appearance, teenagers are bonded to a specific brand as they have a clear preference for them and they know which brands are recognized as the 'cool brands' in the culture. In <https://assignbuster.com/materialism-in-the-millennial-generation-impact-on-the-fashion-industry/>

order to stay feel superior in the culture, the teenager then starts to covet and pay attention to the advertisement of a brand. As a result, brand starts to portray superiority in the marketing industry, it basically conveys the idea of having something that others do not like. It can be seen that this is true. To give an example, relating back to the exclusivity and flourishing second market of Supreme clothing, teenagers willing to spend the extra money to purchase the exclusive item so that they own something that the others do not, thus it makes them feel superior.

Chapter 2. 2 Social Media and the Teenagers Consumption

Streetwear fashion brand and social media shares a very extraordinary bond. They both depend on each other to be able to reach out the consumer. The enormous number of consumers using social media is impossible to be exactly listed. For example, Instagram tends to have more users in the age group of the youth. It turns out that social media play a very big role in manipulating a teenager's behaviour in consumerism. The key of why teenager turns to social media is to seek the latest information on a brand. By this, they get a recommendation on a potential purchase. Teenagers are widely influenced by social media when deciding which item they should buy. The word 'hype', which is used to define a high demand clothing are what drives a teenager to spend more time on social media to look for the product they want. This is because the purchase decision of everyone on social media is influenced by the fashion blogs and fashionista. In the streetwear fashion culture language, a fashionista who collects hype products is called as an 'hypebeast'. Teenagers often look up on them through social media for inspiration on several product categories such as apparel and accessories.

This is one of the factors that increase the demand of a specific clothing. Relating social media and fashion, the teenagers are classified as fashion followers, which is known as those who go for a specific fashion trend. The youth don't have the luxurious time and money to spend on fashion pursuits, which draw them to feel insecure about their fashion taste. Therefore, the majority of the youth look up to fashion influencer in the social media to imitate the trend they are setting. Teenagers do this because by owning a piece of clothing that is widely trending and exposed in the social media, the teenager feels great for getting all the attention and keeping up with the pace in the streetwear culture.

Chapter 2.3 The Youth Portrayed by the Mass Media

The mass media can be classified as the most significant platform for young modern teenagers to portray their lifestyles in an individualized perspective of view. Mass media has always been emphasizing the concept of youth representing a meaningful and influential phase in a person's life actively. However, the appearance of youth as a symbol and victim as well as threat to the society contradicted the media action. Boëthius stated that popular culture portrayed in the media has always been a threat to the teenagers and the threat has been expressed very clearly through a process which the media overemphasize the criminal behaviour of young teenagers for its own good, called as 'moral panics'. Osgerby (1998b) argues that the economic boost of the 1980s teenagers were rarely symbolized as an icon of 'consumer empowerment' when there's a statement pointing out that the teenager's use of the media is encouraging their consumer lifestyle.

Chapter 3 Brand Marketing and The Influences of Attitudes

The marketers of a brand are always implying the message that wealth and aspiration to wealth are cool. This sparks the urge in a teenager to keep possessing more items in order to fulfil their materialism and increases consumerism at the same time. On what stated at Chapter 1. 2, we can conclude that discount and low prices are not the crux of attracting customers as well as to boost the sales. The marketers are influencing the attitudes of consumer through design. The function of attitudes, a theory developed by psychologist Daniel Katz, explains to us the four classifications of what attitudes served us are utilitarian, value-expressive, ego-defensive and knowledge. Utilitarian function of attitude helps us to focus on a product benefits by reaching our goals. Marketers work to change our buying attitudes with problem-solving capabilities of their products with the utilitarian function. The value-expressive function, which is been practiced by the teenagers in the streetwear culture, means that we are expressing our personality and image through the products we buy and wear. The function of value-expressive attitude has been widely used by the marketers by assuring a more lavish and happy life when you own their products, whether its accessories, cosmetics or clothing. The ego-defensive function, an attitude we formed to protect us from anxieties from being judged. The concern about our look motivates us to pay attention to our grooming and use products to impress the public. Lastly, the knowledge function of attitudes aids us to order the information we encounter. The new products proclaimed by marketing information reaches us through every direction of media, including the magazine, the Web, billboards and television. Due to the different individual way of differentiating our values and what is important to us, the <https://assignbuster.com/materialism-in-the-millennial-generation-impact-on-the-fashion-industry/>

way we use our attitudes functions are different from the others. Marketers are aware of these and have reach out to us in various ways. There are several influences that contribute to how we shape our attitudes like our own personality, the experience we had, family and friends. A human personality is the psychological characteristics of a person that routinely influence the way people respond to their surroundings. The personal characteristics are what makes us unique and different from others. Some of the characteristics are known as extroverts or introverts, passive or active, leaders or followers are part of our own personality. To support this statement that relates to my research, when teenagers is considering a new fashion look, the one who is more of a follower than a leader often will wait until they see others wearing the style before they will wear it. Thus, the very own individual characteristics of each individual influences the person's decisions and resulting behaviour. Our personal experience with a product also influence the kinds of attitudes we shape. For example, a consumer always looks for the same brand again when we experienced a great success with a certain brand. We gather information to help us to gain experience at the same time. The media bombarded us with multiple marketing messages to persuade us to purchase a product so we don't really have to look for it. The role of family and friends also affects our attitudes. In the case of family, we are mostly influenced when we are young due to them being the dominant figure in our lives as children. A child would tend to follow their family decisions because they are still not exposed to the other influences. When we talk other influences, the common one will be friends. Friends and peers are the main influence of our attitude formation from childhood onwards. Peers often have similar attitude towards something such as fashion, games, food and entertainment. The <https://assignbuster.com/materialism-in-the-millennial-generation-impact-on-the-fashion-industry/>

influences of teenagers towards each other are probably the most critical one. To relate my research to this statement, the teenager in the streetwear culture often compare themselves among their peers with their clothing apparels, their expensive items. This influences the desperation of an individual to get what their peers have; thus it promotes materialism in the youth.

The Final Word

Although streetwear culture is not that popular in the older days, we can't conclude that today's streetwear culture is the same as the previous one. The progress of their culture is growing rapidly and new trends keep appearing every day. The popular brand like Supreme always continue to come up with new relevant streetwear products to persuade the youth to keep buying their product, thus most of the youth are loyal to the brand. Brand like Supreme could always produce more quantity of their high demand products but in order to maintain the exclusivity of their product and always stay relevant in the culture, the brand remains their old ways of business thus increasing the number of resellers in the culture and this encourages teenager to spend extra money from retail price to own the piece they want. The materialistic teenager's behaviours and attitude cultivated by the marketing strategy by the streetwear brands are the reason why the culture is able to grow and last for so long. The behaviour continues to amplify and will eventually be exposed to the future youth generation through the same method, which is the mass media and social influences. The advertising campaign by a brand does play a part in developing the materialistic youth in the streetwear culture, either through print materials or in the digital world. The portrayal of

youth by the mass media encourages the marketers to promote their brand in a way that youth will pay more attention to them for their own good.

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